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House Appropriations Committee

Testimony from Maryland Humanities re:
HB937

March 3, 2021

Maryland Humanities offers this testimony in support of proposed HB937. This bill would update language in Article – Business Regulation, Section 11–403(a)(9), Annotated Code of Maryland (2015 Replacement Volume and 2020 Supplement) and Article – State Government, Section 9–120(b)(1), Annotated Code of Maryland (2014 Replacement Volume and 2020 Supplement).

Maryland Humanities was very fortunate to be included in the original legislation, HB 965 (2016), which provided \$150,000 annually for two years (FY18 and FY19) to support our service to Marylanders via our programs, including Maryland History Day.

During the 2018 Session, SB1158/HB1721 was passed, removing the end date for the funding specified in the original legislation, which also included incentive monies for the Maryland International and Preakness Stakes and funding for the Maryland Stadium Authority’s youth and amateur sporting events grants, in addition to Maryland Humanities. However, the language included in the 2018 bill created an issue, discovered in early FY20, which prevented the grant from being provided by the State even though it was clear the Maryland General Assembly unanimously passed the bill specifying the funding be perpetual.

Working with Secretary Brinkley and his team at the Department of Budget & Management, a solution was found during FY20. Gov. Hogan generously included the \$150,000 in a separate annual grant using monies from the general fund received via the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) in the Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) and for FY21 and proposed for FY22.

Through this bill, we simply seek to have the funding for this annual grant specified and ensured for the long-term, to take effect at a date mutually agreeable to all.

Maryland Humanities' programs consistently reach more than a quarter-million Marylanders statewide and did so again in 2020—despite the massive disruptions posed by the pandemic. We offered more than 1,000 events last year, both in-person and virtual, with direct participation by more than 83,400 and additional audience of 192,000 thanks to grant-supported events and mass communications including radio broadcasts.

We have been able to accelerate our program service thanks to the enhanced resources offered by this \$150,000 grant received each year since FY18.

Since 1999, **Maryland History Day** has gathered hundreds of thousands of middle and high school students to conduct intensive research projects that interpret historic events of local, national, and global significance. Nearly 600 students competed at the state level, and five times in recent years Maryland has had national Gold Medalists, from Allegany, Calvert, Garrett, and Howard Counties. In the three completed years we've had the funding, more than nearly 83,000 students have participated at the classroom level, including more than 33,000 from all 23 counties and Baltimore City during the 2019–20 school year, an all-time high. Funds have provided cash stipends to participating school districts to administer county contests and supported in-school outreach visits offering professional development to teachers and mentoring to students, among other program costs.

This funding also has supported our Museum on Main Street, One Maryland One Book, and Grants programs.

Through **Museum on Main Street**, small communities benefit from the immense resources of the Smithsonian Institution as they experience mobile interactive exhibitions focused on America's history. Host organizations create locally focused companion exhibits and events. We wrapped a six-county tour of *Water/Ways* in Prince Frederick last March, with more than 42,500 visitors and participants. This April we'll launch the next tour exploring voting rights and democracy, *Voices & Votes*, which will visit Allegany, Queen Anne's, Wicomico, Montgomery, and Baltimore counties. Funds have supported pre-tour capacity building workshops and consultants for host organizations and community partners and allowed for cash stipends to enhance locally generated programming that complements the Smithsonian exhibition, among other program costs.

One Maryland One Book is the state's only statewide reading and discussion program. Each fall the program for high school-age readers and up inspires thousands of students and adults to read and discuss a book relevant to the challenges of life today. Each year since 2018, we have provided more than 4,000 free books to public high schools and 4,000 to public library systems, impacting more than 10,000 students and thousands more adults. Funds have provided school and library outreach activities and discussion facilitator training, among other program costs.

Our **Grants** program funds innovative humanities initiatives at organizations both large and small throughout the state. Our major and mini grants—paid for with funding received from the State including a portion of the \$150,000 grant—totaled \$147,921 in 2020, benefitting 28 community organizations. Examples of recent grantees include:

- Lost Towns Project (Anne Arundel)
- Historic Hampton (Baltimore)
- Catoctin Furnace Historical Society (Frederick)
- Patapsco Heritage Greenway (Howard)
- Historic Takoma (Montgomery)
- The United Covenant Union (Somerset)
- Urban Rural Action (Washington)

In addition to an annual appropriation from the National Endowment for the Humanities, these programs and others are also funded in part with private contributions from corporations, foundations, and individuals. With additional in-kind contributions from hundreds of local program partners and grantees in all 23 counties and Baltimore City, **we typically leverage the State of Maryland's investment between four and six times over.**

We respectfully ask the members of the committee to approve the bill to ensure that the overwhelming mandate of the Maryland General Assembly to provide this funding annually is fulfilled.